SERVICE PLAN
2004/05 - 2006/07

Office of the Ombudsman
Province of British Columbia

DOC
BC
O55
D:S4
2004/07
c.3

National Library of Canada Cataloguing in Publication Data

British Columbia. Office of the Ombudsman.
Service plan. -- 2003/04/2005/06-

Annual.
ISSN 1705-5857 = Service plan - British Columbia. Office of the Ombudsman

1. British Columbia. Office of the Ombudsman - Periodicals. 2. Ombudsman - British Columbia - Periodicals. I. Title.

JL429.5.04B74 352.8'8'0971105 C2003-960042-4

LEGISLATIVE LIBRARY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
3 3298 00285 2052

104-06060/

Ombudsman

Legislative Assembly
Province of British Columbia

June 30, 2004

The Honourable Claude Richmond
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
Parliament Buildings, Room 207
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

Dear Mr. Speaker:

It is my pleasure to transmit herewith, to the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia, my Service Plan covering the fiscal years 2004/05 to 2006/07.

Yours truly,

Howard Kushner
Ombudsman
Province of British Columbia

LEGISLATIVE LIBRARY
VICTORIA, B.C. V8V 1X4 JUL 0 5 2004

TABLE OF CONTENTS

OMBUDSMAN'S STATEMENT 1

A. RESOURCE SUMMARY 3

B. CORE BUSINESS AREAS 6

C. GOALS, OBJECTIVES, STRATEGIES AND RESULTS 6

APPENDICES 20

APPENDIX A – SCHEDULE OF AUTHORITIES 20

APPENDIX B – STRATEGIC CONTEXT 22

Overview 22

Vision 23

Mission 24

Values 25

Planning Context 26

Highlights of Strategic Shifts and Changes from Previous Service Plan 27

Consistency with Government Plan 28

APPENDIX C – SUMMARY OF RELATED PLANNING PROCESSES 29

OMBUDSMAN'S STATEMENT

The Service Plan for the Office of the Ombudsman has been developed with the objective of continuing to provide high quality service in times of reduced resources. In December 2001, the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services recommended for the Office of the Ombudsman a three-year budget reduction of 35%. In subsequent years, the Committee has maintained the 35% reduction with the consequence that for 2004/05, our budget is $3.097 million reduced from $4.765 million in 2002/03. The Committee has further proposed a no increase/no decrease budget for 2005/06 and 2006/07. Our Service Plan is premised on these reduced financial resources.

The impact of the 35% reduction has been a decrease in the number of FTE's from 50 to 31 in 2004, a reduction in the number of investigators from 28 to 14.6 and the closure of the Vancouver Office as a public access office. As a consequence, we have reduced our office space costs from $482,000 to $226,000.

We have entered into a shared space/shared services agreements with the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner and the Office of the Police Complaints Commissioner. Our Office is providing IT support and corporate services support to both the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner and the Office of the Police Complaints Commissioner. We share office space with the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner and the Office of the Police Complaints Commissioner in Victoria and with the Office of the Police Complaints Commissioner in Vancouver. As a result of our closing of the Vancouver Office as a public access office we will be providing telecommuting opportunities for some of our Vancouver staff. We will be establishing a mobile Intake Office for the Lower Mainland.

The establishment of a mobile Intake Office and the use of telecommuting staff represents an attempt by our Office to continue to provide high quality service with reduced resources. However, the volume of complaints coming into our Office has not decreased commensurate with the decrease in our resources. Our Intake has remained relatively stable through 2003. As a consequence and in order to ensure timely and effective investigations, we have had to institute internal control measures to limit the number of investigations we will conduct. In January 2003, consistent with my advice to the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services, and as detailed in my 2003/04 Service Plan, we started to decline to investigate complaints about Local Government Authorities and Professional Associations other than in exceptional circumstances. This group of authorities represented (historically) about 10% of the volume of complaints coming into the Office. This restriction will continue for 2004. In addition, in response to the further reduction in the number of investigators, we will be introducing a "holding queue" for complaints in respect of School and School Boards, Hospitals and Health Authorities, and Colleges and Universities (which represent in total about 8% of the Intake). This "holding queue" will allow us to continue to accept complaints about these authorities but the investigation of the complaint may be delayed. These investigations will only

be initiated when we have the capacity to handle the investigation as determined by existing caseloads.

On a positive note, the Office has been successful in mitigating, to some extent, the impact that would be expected from a 35% budget reduction. Restructuring of the Office, enhancement of our Case Tracking System, a management focus on performance and most importantly, the hard work of all the staff members has made this possible.

To assist us in monitoring our efficiency and effectiveness, we have developed a number of performance measures. I am pleased to report on some of these measures in our Service Plan. For example, we have established targets for closing files (70% within 90 days of opening, 85% within 180 days of opening) which, for the most part, we are meeting and superseding. We contracted with BC Stats to conduct a public awareness survey, a complainant/authority satisfaction survey and a staff satisfaction survey. Of interest in the "Public Awareness" survey was the high name recognition (73% of the public had heard of the Office) but low product recognition (only 19% of public were aware of what the Office does). One area that we will be focussing on in 2004 is improving public awareness of our Office.

A. RESOURCE SUMMARY

This section of the Service Plan shows the budget for the Office of the Ombudsman as recommended by the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services along with a description of the service consequences that will flow from this level of funding.

The budget shows a reduction of 35% over three fiscal years from a base budget in 2001/02 of $4.765 M and 50 FTEs to $3,097 M and 31 FTEs in fiscal 2004/05.

Resource Summary

DESCRIPTION	2002/03 Budget Base Year	2003/04 Restated Estimates	2004/05 - Estimates	2005/06 - Plan	2006/07 - Plan
FTE's (Actual)	50	38	31	31	31
Salaries & Benefits	$3,742,000	$3,157,000	$2,610,000	$2,610,000	$2,610,000
Operating Costs	$1,024,000	$894,000	$557,000	$557,000	$557,000
Recoveries	-$1,000	-$1,000	-$70,000	-$70,000	-$70,000
Total Expenses	$4,765,000	$4,050,000	$3,097,000	$3,097,000	$3,097,000
Capital Expenses	$59,000	$62,000	$65,000	$65,000	$65,000

Key Features and Service Consequences

- Expenditures reductions of 35% over three fiscal years (2003-05) followed by a 0% increase in Fiscal 2005/06 and Fiscal 2006-07.
- Reduction from 50 FTEs in 2002 to 31 FTEs in 2004.
- Elimination of Deputy Ombudsman, General Counsel, Associate Counsel, Manager of Systems, and staff throughout the organization, including 11 investigative officers.
- Implementation of Shared Offices and Shared Services between the Office of the Ombudsman, the Office of the Information and Protection of Privacy Commissioner, and the Office of the Police Complaint Commissioner in the areas of Financial, Payroll and Systems support during 2003.
- Closure of the Vancouver office to the public as of April 1, 2004 with consolidation of most staff to the Victoria office.
- A small office, shared with the Office of the Police Complaint Commissioner, will be maintained in Vancouver as a mail drop and for drop in day use by remaining Lower Mainland Investigative staff. Six staff for the Investigative and Intake functions will remain in the Lower Mainland supported on a telecommuting basis.
- No "Walk-In" Intake capability will be provided in the Lower Mainland. A mobile Intake for the Lower Mainland will be established.
- On January 1, 2003 using the discretion provided in the ***Ombudsman Act***, the Ombudsman declined to investigate any new complaints against Local Government Authorities and Professional Associations.
- Commencing January 1, 2004 and using the discretion provided in the ***Ombudsman Act***, a holding queue was created for new complaints about Schools and School Boards, Hospitals and Health Authorities, Colleges and Universities. If and when capacity exists to investigate some of these complaints, the files will be assigned to Investigators.
- Every effort will be made to continue to investigate Workers Compensation Board (WCB) complaints. If investigative capacity is insufficient WCB complaints will also be placed in the holding queue.
- The number of Investigative teams was reduced from 5 to 2 in 2003/04 to reflect the reduction in the number of Investigators and the scope of authorities to be investigated.
- The objective continues to be to maintain high quality investigations of those complaints that are investigated but at the same time to maintain an acceptable balance in the workload to staff ratio.

B. CORE BUSINESS AREAS

The Office of the Ombudsman has one Core Business Area and that is the **investigation of complaints** about the administrative decisions or actions of authorities.

C. GOALS, OBJECTIVES, STRATEGIES AND RESULTS

Goals

These four goals are the long-term results we want to achieve in fulfilling the mandate of the Office.

- **Thorough and Impartial Investigations**
- **High Quality Service**
- **High Morale in our Workplace**
- **Education and Public Awareness**

The relationship between the Vision, Goals, and Objectives for the Office of the Ombudsman is shown in the table below. In some cases more than one objective supports a particular goal and in other cases a single objective supports more than one goal.

On the following pages the strategies identified to achieve each of the Objectives are listed along with the key Performance Measures. Although it is difficult to identify performance measures that indicate directly whether or not the Vision is being achieved, two such measures have been identified and are shown at the end of this section.

VISION: ***Fairness and Accountability in Public Administration In British Columbia***				
OBJECTIVES	**GOALS**			
	Thorough & Impartial Investigations	**High Quality Service**	**High Morale In Our Workplace**	**Education & Public Awareness**
Broaden and enhance our understanding of Ombudsmanship and develop and implement actions to achieve high quality service on a continuous basis	**X**	**X**		
Refine our approach to the investigation and resolution of complaints	**X**	**X**		
Manage workload in the most efficient and fair manner possible, having regard for our statutory mandate and available resources		**X**	**X**	
Promote high morale in the workplace through effective communication and adherence to our Guiding Principles		**X**	**X**	
Broaden the public profile and improve external understanding of the role of the Ombudsman and administrative fairness through well-planned initiatives directed towards both the public and authorities			**X**	**X**

A comprehensive set of Performance Measures has been developed covering all components of the Office. The measures and targets identified in the following tables represent the key measures.

Objective 1

To broaden and enhance our understanding of Ombudsmanship and to develop and implement actions to achieve high quality service on a continuous basis.

Strategies

- Establish performance measures for investigative work and administrative and support components of the Office.
- Continue development and update of policies and procedures.
- Carry out and document review of work.
- Conduct and document regular performance reviews and prepare work plans.
- Enhance the quality and content of training:
- Encourage all individuals and teams to take responsibility in the training process through self-training, courses and development of materials.
- Continue training of all staff on issues of equality, diversity and accessibility.
- Establish and support consultation with colleagues in other Ombudsman offices.
- Develop a training package on administrative fairness and investigative skills.
- Publish a revised Code of Administrative Justice.

Performance Measures, Targets, and Results

Measure	Value (Target)	Actual Performance
Performance measures are established and reviewed on an annual basis.	Yes	Yes
Policy and Procedures for key processes are in place and up to date	Yes	Yes
Performance assessments are carried out on a routine basis.	Yes	Yes
Percentage of complainants giving our Office a rating of "satisfied" in relation to the process of investigation of their complaint. ***Note 1.***	> 85%	Survey by BC Stats during 2003 See Results 1. below
Percentage of authorities giving our office a rating of "satisfied" in relation to the process of investigation of complaints against them. ***Note 1.***	>85%	Survey by BC Stats during 2003 See Results 2. below.
Percentage of people using the services of the Office who are satisfied with access capability by phone, fax, web, etc.	>90%	Survey by BC Stats during 2003 See Results 3. below.

Note 1. *These measurements are intended to focus on satisfaction with the investigation process and were designed to attempt to isolate the influence of any disagreement with the investigation findings. Also the measurement includes factors that contribute to overall "satisfaction" such as courtesy, timeliness, communication, etc.*

Results 1. Overall 48% of complainants were "satisfied" with the process of the investigation. However, statistical analysis showed that complainants were unable to separate the influence of their views about the outcome of the investigation from their assessment of the investigation process. 91% of complainants, who agreed with the outcome of the investigation into their complaints, were "satisfied" with the process while 26% of those, who disagreed with the outcome of the investigation, were "satisfied" with the process.

Results 2. Overall 88% of authorities were "satisfied" with the process of the investigation. However, statistical analysis showed that authorities were unable to separate the influence of their views about the outcome of the investigation from their assessment of the investigation process. 94% of authorities, who agreed with the outcome of the investigation, were "satisfied" with the process, while 6% of authorities who disagreed with the outcome were "satisfied" with the process.

Results 3. 84% of complainants were satisfied with accessibility and 90% were satisfied with the access options. 93% of authorities were satisfied with accessibility and 95% were satisfied with the access options.

Objective 2

To refine our approach to the investigation and resolution of complaints.

Strategies

- Enhance our understanding of investigative techniques through research, discussion, practice, and sharing of information about investigations and approaches to them.
- Define and develop investigative approaches that identify the underlying factors that cause unfairness, in addition to a focus on the resolution of individual complaints.
- Promote improvement of skills through development of materials and provision of training.

Performance Measures, Targets, and Results

Measure	Value (Target)	Actual Performance
Training and development opportunities are provided	Yes	2003 - $19,800 direct costs for course registration and training related travel costs. Associated Salary Costs - $22,400
Staff are encouraged to enhance their individual skills	Yes	2003 – 22 staff have participated in 78 training days

Objective 3

To manage workload in the most efficient and fair manner possible, having regard for our statutory mandate and available resources.

Strategies

- Improve case load management and related case review and develop workload standards.
- Discuss and develop policy on the exercise of discretion under section 13 of the ***Ombudsman Act*** when determining whether or not to investigate a complaint.
- Provide time management training.
- Develop policy regarding secondment opportunities and filling temporary vacancies.
- Continue enhancement of the Case Tracker System and other computer support systems.

Performance Measures, Targets, and Results

Measure	Value (Target)	Actual Performance	
		2002	2003
Average cost per complaint Investigated. ***Note 2***	Average inflation adjusted cost is steady or decreasing	$1,788 ***See Note 3.***	$1,923 ***See Note 4.***
Percentage of complaint files closed within 90 days of opening.	70%	80%	83%
Percentage of complaint files closed within 180 days of opening.	85%	88%	91%
Percentage of complaint files closed within 1 year of opening.	90%	94%	96%
Percentage of complaint files closed within 2 years of opening.	95%	98%	98%
Percentage of complaint files closed within 3 years of opening.	100%	99%	99%
Percentage of open complaint files more than 1 year old at the end of the specified calendar year.	2002 – less than 20% 2003 – less than 15% 2004 – less than 10%	23.5%	17%

Note 2. *In association with the performance measure reflecting the trend on the average cost per complaint investigated; an ancillary indicator will be calculated that will show the contingent cost associated with future investigation of backlogged complaint files.*

Note 3. *A baseline year of 2000 has been chosen based on available data. The cost per investigation in 2000 was $1,861. In 2001 the cost was $1,687. All costs have been adjusted for inflation to year 2000 dollars. Complaints investigated include files closed by Investigators with investigation plus 30% of files closed without investigation, plus 10% of files closed by Intake Complaints Analysts.*

Note 4. *The contingent cost associated with potential future investigation of backlogged complaint files is estimated to be $394,000 based on the number of complaint files (205) that have been declined as a result of the budget related reduction in investigative capacity during 2003.*

Objective 4

To promote high morale in the workplace through effective communication and adherence to our Guiding Principles.

Strategies

- Review our Employment Equity Plan.
- Encourage acknowledgement of each other's efforts.
- Provide more public, office or team recognition of employees' achievements.
- Consult with staff about the need for an internal staff grievance procedure.
- Clarify expectations about workload and performance standards.
- Encourage staff development opportunities within the Office.
- Offer variation in tasks, duties and/or responsibilities.
- Recognize existence of stress and provide support in dealing with its negative effects.
- Develop policy regarding secondment opportunities.

Performance Measures, Targets, and Results

Measure	Value (Target)	Actual Performance
Percentage of staff who rate themselves as satisfied with their job and work environment.	>95%	87% satisfied with job 56% satisfied with work environment
Staff lost time due to illness or injury.	At or below the average for the BC Public Service.	2003 – 7.44 days/employee Public Service average 8.7 days/employee

Objective 5

To broaden the public profile and improve external understanding of the role of the Ombudsman and administrative fairness through well-planned initiatives directed towards both the public and authorities.

Strategies

- Post all public reports on our website.
- Increase opportunities for citizens to meet with the Ombudsman in their local communities.
- Provide information about available remedies on our Internet website.
- Promote and support establishment of a team-focused strategy to meet with authorities, at all levels, to discuss with and inform them about the role of the Office of the Ombudsman and administrative fairness.
- Update and maintain multilingual brochures.
- Review the Office's communications strategy.

Performance Measures, Targets, and Results

Measure	Value (Target)	Actual Performance
Percentage of people randomly surveyed who are aware of the Office of the Ombudsman.	Increases with each survey	Based on BC Stats survey carried out during 2003: 73% of public contacted had heard of the Office. 19% of public contacted were aware of what the Office does.

Vision

Fairness and Accountability in Public Administration In British Columbia

Performance Measures, Targets, and Results

Measure	Value (Target)	Actual Performance	
		2002	2003
Number of Investigations where the Authority refuses to accept the recommendations of the Office of the Ombudsman.	0	0	2
Number of complaint investigations that lead to a positive change in practice, policies, statutes, or regulations by authorities.	*	350	124

* *A target value cannot be set for this measure as the outcome varies with the type of complaints being investigated and it would be inconsistent with the need for unbiased investigations to set an arbitrary target. However, this measure is considered to be a useful indicator of the influence of the Ombudsman's recommendations on changes to the policies and practices of authorities.*

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Schedule of Authorities

1 Ministries of the government.

2 A person, corporation, commission, board, bureau or authority who is or the majority of the members of which are, or the majority of the members of the board of management or board of directors of which are,

(a) appointed by an Act, minister, the Lieutenant Governor in Council,
(b) in the discharge of their duties, public officers or servants of the government, or
(c) responsible to the government.

3 A corporation the ownership of which or a majority of the shares of which is vested in the government.

4 Municipalities.

5 Regional districts.

6 The Islands Trust established under the *Islands Trust Act.*

7 Improvement districts as defined in the *Municipal Act.*

8 The Capital Improvement District under the *Capital Commission Act.*

9 Boards, committees, commissions or similar bodies established under the *Municipal Act* or *Vancouver Charter;*

10 The Resort Municipality of Whistler and the Whistler Resort Association.

11 A local trust committee, the Trust Council, the Trust Fund Board and the executive committee and persons to whom their powers are delegated under the *Islands Trust Act.*

12 Library boards defined in the *Library Act.*

13 Regional parks boards established under the *Parks (Regional) Act* and the Cultus Lake Park Board.

14 A greater board as defined in section 872 of the *Municipal Act.*

15 Development districts, water users' communities, comptroller and regional water manager under the *Water Act.*

16 The commissioners of a district defined in section 58 of the *Drainage, Ditch and Dike Act* and an engineer, commissioner, inspector of dikes or land settlement board acting under that Act.

17 The British Columbia Diking Authority and a diking authority under the *Dike Maintenance Act.*

18 The Okanagan Kootenay Sterile Insect Release Board.

19 Regional transit commissions established under the *British Columbia Transit Act.*

20 A corporation

(a) more than 50% of the issued voting shares of which are owned by one or more of the authorities listed in section 4 to 19 or this section, or

(b) that is controlled by one or more of the authorities listed in section 4 to 19 and, for the purpose of ascertaining control, a corporation is controlled by one or more of these authorities if a majority of the members of the corporation or of its board of directors or board of management consists of either or both of the following:
    (i) persons appointed as members by the authorities;
    (ii) officers or employees of an authority acting as such.

21 Schools and boards as defined in the *School Act.*

21.1 Francophone education authorities as defined in the School Act and francophone schools operated by francophone education authorities.

22 Universities as defined in the *University Act.*

23 The University of Northern British Columbia.

24 Royal Roads University.

25 Institutions as defined in the *College and Institute Act.*

26 Hospitals and boards of management of hospitals as defined in the *Hospital Act.*

27 Governing bodies of professional and occupations associations that are established or continued by an Act.

28 Regional Health Boards and Community Health Councils established under the *Health Authorities Act.*

29 Regional Hospital Districts under the *Hospital District Act.*

30 Technical University of British Columbia.

31 The Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority established under the Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority Act.

Appendix B – Strategic Context

Overview

The role of the Office is to investigate complaints from members of the public about administrative actions or decisions of authorities. The Ombudsman's Office is one of the key institutions in a democracy for ensuring the provision of open and accountable decision making. The Ombudsman is an Officer of the Legislature. As such, the Office of the Ombudsman is independent of government. The Ombudsman is not an advocate for complainants or defender of authorities. Rather the Ombudsman conducts confidential and impartial investigations and makes recommendations in situations where the authority is being unfair in the conduct of its business. The Ombudsman cannot order an authority to change a decision or practice but can expose unfair actions through reports to the legislature and the public. In the vast majority of situations where some unfairness might be found to have occurred, the authority carries out actions to rectify the situation and the file is closed without formal findings being made by the Office.

The ***Ombudsman Act*** establishes jurisdiction for the Ombudsman to investigate a wide range of public authorities (see Appendix A). However the ***Ombudsman Act*** also provides the Ombudsman with discretion to determine which complaints will be investigated.

Over the past three years the Office has implemented the 35% budget reduction required of the Office. This has resulted in the reduction from 50 FTEs to 31 FTEs and the closure of the Vancouver Office as a full service public access office. Effective April 1, 2004 there are five investigative staff and one intake staff member in the Lower Mainland operating as telecommuters. A small drop-in office has been established in conjunction with the Office of the Police Complaint Commissioner for these staff to use for meetings as required. In order to try to improve public access in the Lower Mainland area, a Mobile Intake system is being set up whereby the Intake staff will be present on a rotating schedule at communities in Greater Vancouver.

The Office has made significant strides in reducing the backlog of active complaints under investigation so that the caseload of each Investigative Officer is appropriate to allow high quality investigations. Because of the budget reductions, the Ombudsman has found it necessary to use the discretionary authority under the ***Act*** to ensure that Investigative Officers do not once again become overwhelmed by their caseload. This means that investigations of complaints, against certain authorities, are not occurring due to the budget reductions. The details of the service restrictions are outlined in the "Key features and Service Consequences" section of the RESOURCE SUMMARY found near the beginning of this document.

Fiscal year 2004/05 represents the first time in three years that the Office will not be planning how to implement a further budget reduction. The impact of planning for and carrying out the significant budget reductions of the past few years has been enormous. During this fiscal year, the Office will be updating its Strategic Plan to reflect the changes that have occurred and set a revised course that will allow it to keep making progress on its Vision of Fairness and Accountability in Public Administration in British Columbia.

Vision

Informed by an understanding and appreciation
of the
principles, responsibilities and powers
embedded in the
Ombudsman Act,
and driven by a commitment to
justice and fair treatment of people,
The Office of the Ombudsman
strives for:

Fairness and Accountability
in
Public Administration
In
British Columbia

Mission

The mandate and function of the Office of the Ombudsman are set out in the ***Ombudsman Act***. The Ombudsman can investigate complaints about the administrative decisions or actions of authorities. Appendix A contains the Schedule of Authorities within the Ombudsman's jurisdiction.

Why we exist

- to ensure that every member of the public is treated fairly by authorities.

Who we serve

- the public
- the Legislature of British Columbia

What we do

- respond to inquiries from the public
- conduct thorough, impartial and independent investigations of complaints
- consider possible resolution of complaints
- consult with, provide reasons and make recommendations to authorities to improve administrative practices
- promote fairness in public administration

Values

These values govern the way we do our work with the public, authorities and one another. The values are intended to be consistent with the principles of natural justice and administrative fairness, the Ombudsman Act, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and relevant international covenants, treaties and agreements.

Respect

Treating everyone with courtesy, dignity and respect.

Leadership

Promoting fairness, equity, clarity, innovation and consistency.

Equality

Promoting equality, inclusion and access for all persons.

Continuous Learning

Encouraging and valuing continuous learning.

Cooperation

Using cooperation, empathy and goodwill in our work.

Teamwork

Valuing the diversity of experience and talent of people who have a unity of purpose and commitment to success.

Integrity

Being independent, impartial and honest.

Accountability

Performing our duties in a timely, responsive and responsible manner, and measuring and reporting on our work.

Planning Context

To achieve our vision, it is important first to recognize the strengths, areas to improve, opportunities and challenges facing us today as an organization.

We identify our strengths as:

- the diversity, talents and commitment of our staff;
- the team structure of our Office organization;
- strong committed leadership;
- the *Ombudsman Act*;
- our computer support systems;
- safe, functional and pleasant office facilities;
- respect for the Office of the Ombudsman by authorities;
- our ability to deal with a large volume of complaints;
- a work environment that encourages positive office morale;
- the use of internal and external communication tools; and
- a commitment to maintain our strengths.

We identify the following areas for improvement:

- orientation of new staff;
- training and development opportunities for all staff;
- internal quality assurance measures;
- handling the impact of changes in staffing; and
- broadening authorities' and the public's understanding of the role of the Ombudsman

We identify our opportunities as:

- technological advances that make communication and investigations easier;
- national and international growth of Ombudsmanship that improves general knowledge of the role of the Ombudsman;
- development of internal complaint remedies by authorities that improve administrative fairness;
- collaboration with other Ombudsman offices for sharing ideas, procedures and systems;
- enhanced public profile that builds understanding of the Ombudsman's role;
- education of public and authorities that improves understanding of administrative fairness;
- continued internal learning that increases staff effectiveness and satisfaction; and
- use of a broader range of communication techniques.

We identify our challenges as:

- budget restrictions;
- changes in governmental priorities, policies and programs;
- limited awareness and understanding by the public and authorities of the Ombudsman's role;
- providing high quality service in a geographically and culturally diverse province;
- public cynicism towards public agencies and authorities;
- increasing complexity of complaints; and
- maintaining a work environment that encourages positive office morale.

Highlights of Strategic Shifts and Changes from Previous Service Plan

This Service Plan contains no significant shifts from the stated plans contained in the Service Plan tabled last year. Some organizational changes have been implemented including the reduction to two Investigative teams rather than three, the creation of the position of Director of Investigations, and the elimination of in-house Legal Counsel. These changes have been made to achieve the overall budget targets set for the Office while maintaining the maximum possible resource allocation to the Investigative Teams.

Consistency with Government Plan

As an Independent Office of the Legislature it would not be appropriate to expect the service plan for the Office to be in direct alignment with the strategic priorities of the government. However, it can be seen from a comparison of the Government and Office of the Ombudsman Strategic Plans, that there is a strong correlation in terms of the desire to ensure that citizens are treated fairly and in an accountable manner in their dealings with public authorities.

Government	Office of the Ombudsman
Vision: British Columbia is a prosperous and just province, whose citizens achieve their potential and have confidence in the future	**Vision:** Fairness and Accountability in Public Administration in British Columbia
Core Values: **Integrity**: to make decisions in a manner that is consistent, professional, fair and balanced **Fiscal Responsibility**: to implement affordable public policies **Accountability**: to enhance efficiency, effectiveness and credibility of government **Respect**: to treat all citizens equitably, compassionately and respectfully **Choice**: afford citizens the opportunity to exercise self-determination	**Values:** **Respect:** Treating everyone with courtesy, dignity and respect. **Leadership:** Promoting fairness, equity, clarity, innovation and consistency. **Equality:** Promoting equality, inclusion and access for all persons. **Continuous Learning:** Encouraging and valuing continuous learning. **Cooperation:** Using cooperation, empathy and goodwill in our work. **Teamwork:** Valuing the diversity of experience and talent of people who have a unity of purpose and commitment to success. **Integrity:** Being independent, impartial and honest. **Accountability:** Performing our duties in a timely, responsive and responsible manner, and measuring and reporting on our work

Appendix C – Summary of Related Planning Processes

Information Resource Management Plan

The Office of the Ombudsman maintains its own internal Information Systems capability for security and confidentiality reasons as required under the ***Ombudsman Act***. The hardware and software utilized is consistent with current government standards and is acquired using government purchasing Master Standing Offers if possible.

No significant software development initiatives or hardware purchases are contemplated. Hardware and software is replaced on a routine 3 year cycle with approximately 1/3 of the equipment being replaced each year in order to maintain reliability and performance requirements.

The Office of the Ombudsman Systems staff also provides systems support to the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner and the Office of the Police Complaint Commissioner. This support is being provided under a form of shared services agreements.

The closure of the Vancouver Office and implementation of telecommuters has resulted in the need to support staff in remote locations. This is being done effectively using VPN technology. The Office is reviewing the costs and benefits of Voice over IP technology to support the voice communication needs of the telecommuters.

Human Resource Management Plan

The Office of the Ombudsman has not developed a separate Human Resource Management Plan. Rather the objectives, strategies, performance measures and targets related to Human Resource Management are integrated with the overall Strategic Plan for the Office. This is because Human Resource Management is not Goal or Core Business Area that stands on its own but it is a crucial component in any strategic plan for an organization. Of course, the over-riding human resource management issue has been the downsizing from 50 FTEs to 31 FTEs made necessary by the budget reductions.

The strategies that are included in the Strategic Plan that relate primarily to Human Resource Management are restated below:

- Establish performance measures for investigative work and administrative and support components of the Office.
- Conduct and document regular performance reviews and prepare work plans.
- Promote improvement of skills through development of materials and provision of training.
- Encourage all individuals and teams to take responsibility in the training process through self-training, courses and development of materials.
- Continue training of all staff on issues of equality, diversity and accessibility.
- Develop a training package on administrative fairness and investigative skills.
- Encourage acknowledgement of each other's efforts.
- Provide more public, office or team recognition of employees' achievements.
- Clarify expectations about workload and performance standards.
- Encourage staff development opportunities within the Office.
- Offer variation in tasks, duties and/or responsibilities.
- Recognize existence of stress and provide support in dealing with its negative effects.
- Develop policy regarding secondment opportunities